



Testimony of Jennifer Parzych, Ph.D.
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Department of Counseling and School Psychology

in opposition to
S.B. 1095 (RAISED) - AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS
Education Committee – March 1, 2023

Representative Currey, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthel, Vice Chair Leeper, Vice Chair Winfield and esteemed members of the Education Committee, my name is Jennifer Parzych and I am a counselor educator at Southern Connecticut State University, former high school and middle school counselor of 15 years in this state, as well as a member of the Connecticut School Counselor Association's Government Relations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to offer **testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 1095 - AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS.**

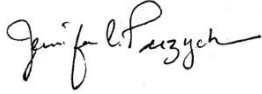
School counselors have a responsibility first and foremost to support student wellness and development. The ethical standards of our profession clearly outline the school counselor's role in sustaining healthy relationships and managing boundaries (ASCA Ethical Standard A. 5.). Inherent is a warning against acting in dual roles or outside of the scope and practice of school counseling, such as providing direct discipline. When boundary lines are blurred – in this case, that school counselors may be assigned duties of a school resource officer - this severely hinders and weakens the counselor-student relationship. This relationship is built on trust and the emotionally safe space created through counseling.

School Resource Officers (SROs) are sworn law enforcement officials largely tasked with ensuring school security. While student discipline is more often a role of building administrators than the SRO, a recent policy report from CT Voices for Children (2019) finds that in schools where SROs are present higher rates of exclusionary practices (i.e., suspension, expulsion) exist, and particularly among Black and Latino students. It is inappropriate to suggest that school counselors may take on such non-counseling activities as that of the SRO.

Perhaps the intent of the raised bill is that there would be increased collaborations between SROs and student support personnel with mental health training (i.e., school counselors, social workers, psychologists), to promote and implement schoolwide interventions that create a safe and supportive environment. Or, perhaps an implied recognition that SROs need increased training in child trauma, unique needs of special education students, mentoring, and counseling in order to more effectively work in schools. However, as written, raised SB 1095 is unclear as to what the SRO duties are that may be assigned to a school counselor.

Respectfully, **I would ask that you modify this bill. School counselors should not be doing the work of the School Resource Officer as it is in direct conflict with the work and role of the school counselor.** With mental health needs of youth ever-increasing since the COVID pandemic, school counselors in Connecticut are already stretched thin in their ability to provide services that support each student's social-emotional, academic, and career development. This, coupled with caseloads that far exceed the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) recommended 1:250 (Connecticut current average 1:343, notwithstanding the fact that the majority of the state's elementary school students do not have any access to a school counselor), speaks more to the increased access needs to mental health supports than it does to adding additional and grossly inappropriate non-counseling duties such as law enforcement.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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